

IF THE SHROUD COULD SPEAK

by FATHER PETER LITTLE S.J.

I was woven in herringbone style with linen threads - each with many fibrils. Joseph of Arimathaea bought me for Jesus. Jesus - the supreme high priest, now immolated and being prepared for burial: in view of his resurrection as the glorified Victim of the Cross; Word-Son and Icon-Image of the Father and the revelation of his redeeming love, through the triple symbolism of his own sacred heart; Head of the Church and her Bridegroom: preparing his ecclesial Bride to be one with him in the eucharistic sacrifice and the Holy Communion of persons flowing from participation in it: a Communion of faith, hope and charity in anticipation of the Beatific Vision - and the ultimate Resurrection and communion of persons in a Restored Universe - full fruit of his sacrifice. Jesus: now to be buried - hastily, sans washing, sans anointing - at least till the day after the Sabbath.

They sprinkle me with myrrh and aloes. They bind the Lord's wrists and ankles after placing the HEAD-BAND in position. They lower the now rigid body on to me and fold me back over the head. Blood, some clotted, some in a post-mortem and gravity flow, is transferred to me. Just blood.

I AM LEFT ALONE AS WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION

The wounded body lies within me in the still and dark of night till (it's my guess!) a sudden burst of light and heat pours forth from it - a wondrous phenomenon resulting from the mighty power of God's Holy Spirit at work in the Resurrection. I feel the top surface area of my tiny linen fibrils being 'scorched' to a golden-brown. It's an oxidation and dehydration of my cellulose make-up: in technical short-hand, a cellulose degradation. I am instantly marked with a full-length frontal and dorsal image of the body I enclose. In a flash that body is no longer within me! I simply collapse. Maybe, as the Lord rises without in the least disturbing either me or the head-band, he wills - out of love for his Church - to leave this imprint on me and so on her heart. For while in rising he removes every sign of his immolation, bar the five great marks of nails and spear thrust, he leaves the mute evidence of what he endured forever seared and sealed in my fibres and fibrils. I wait. Suddenly the ground shakes; light comes rushing in as an Angel removes the great stone from the entrance; I hear terrified shouts from the soldiers on guard duty; then voices - of women, 'angels' and finally of Peter and John. I hear them saying: 'Look! The shroud's collapsed. But the head-band hasn't collapsed with it: au contraire! It's still in its wrapped-round condition! It's still INSIDE - in its ORIGINAL POSITION! Of course Peter and John speak in Aramaic, but John says 'I must get this down in Greek as well.' Let me see: 3 "blepo ta othonia KEIMENA" (from the

ante-chamber 'I see the shroud COLLAPSED')...Peter (going right in to the tomb) "theorei (sees...with awe) ta othonia keimena (the shroud collapsed - as I had), kai ton sudarion (and the sweat-band which had been round his head) OU, meta ton othonion, keimenon (NOT, as was the shroud, collapsed), alla choris (but, au contraire) EN-TETELYGMENON (inside - wrapped round) EIS E N A TOPON (in its O R I G I N A L position).' But they see no images, no blood: as yet.

I START MY LONG JOURNEY FROM PLACE TO PLACE

They looked after me - discretely. They sent me to King ABGAR V (in Edessa): folding me first in such a way that only the Face could be seen. After rich framing I was enshrined over the City Gate, to seek divine protection. But in 57 AD, trouble for the Christians! They made a copy of me on a tile, got a great candle and hid me - with them - in the City wall. I stayed there till 544. Just as well! There were dreadful floods, especially in 544. Workmen came for repairs. They found me: a cloth bearing only a beautifully framed FACE IMAGE - but one, they all knew from ancient records, 'NOT MADE BY HANDS'. I was delighted that as a result of my being discovered ICON artists throughout the Empire made the most of what they could decipher on me. They didn't know my secret, but you can see on their marvellous mosaics at least 15 strange facial features they would never have depicted except as being on the meticulously copied image. Suddenly the Lord Jesus is no longer a beardless, youthful type: but older and bearded. In the 600's the Moslems took Edessa. In 944 the Emperor in Constantinople rescued me for his City: in exchange for 2000 Moslem prisoners and 12 000 silver coins. I was exhibited in St Mary's church. In 1204 the Crusaders arrived. I was whisked away by the Knights Templar, arriving eventually in Paris. Can I provide evidence of my travels? Easily! Wherever I go I collect POLLEN grains and spores. They're tiny but tough; beautiful and distinctive when seen through the electron microscope. I picked up at least 28 from the Holy Land, 18 from Edessa, 14 from Constantinople. I'm as old as the hills: anybody with an FBI mentality can see that!

I GET INTO TROUBLE AND AM DECLARED A FRAUD

Ian Wilson (The Turin Shroud) and Rex Morgan (Perpetual Miracle) have reconstructed my fortunes with the Knights and the great de Charny family. What a hullabaloo when a Geoffrey de Charny's widow (Geoffrey was killed at the Battle of Poitiers) began to exhibit me in 1357! The Bishop, Henry of Poitiers, condemned me as a fake: how could a priceless relic like the genuine shroud belong to a poor widow? But this poor widow's daughter-in-law was married to an uncle of the anti-Pope Clement VII in Avignon: I was shown again. It matters who you know! But another Bishop (of Troyes) got hold of

Bishop Henry's letter and renewed the hullabaloo. Finally 'Pope' Clement had had enough and let the Bishop know it: 'BASTA! SILENZIO!' Eventually the family passed me on for safe-keeping to the Royal House of Savoy in 1453. (Poor Constantinople! it fell - just as well I wasn't THERE!) I was seen occasionally, on grand royal occasions. But in 1532 near-disaster struck: FIRE! I'll never forget it. I was super-heated, being inside a silver container and folded into 48 squares. A drop of molten silver fell through me and left a whole series of symmetrical scorches. They took me to the Poor Clare nuns, who spent a couple of years repairing me: they also sewed a backing cloth on me. They rolled me round a central core and encased me in silk and several containers. Then came the Black Death - and how hard it hit Milan!

MY LONG-HIDDEN SECRET IS REVEALED

St Charles Borromeo (the Archbishop) promised the Lord Jesus he'd make a pilgrimage to me if the plague stopped. It did. St Charles came: I was now in Turin, new HQ for the Royal House. He spent 40 hours in worship before me. They built a beautiful chapel as a shrine for me: with no wood - to minimise fire damage. They showed me now and then to crowds of the faithful: the Bishop successors of the Apostles alone being allowed to hold me up on the steps of the Cathedral.

Come 1898: and at last I am ready to reveal my secret. SECONDO PIA, Italy's top amateur photographer, trains his camera on me...and nearly faints when he sees the developed negative: dim detail of the image leaps to his eyes with awesome clarity, and the FACE COMES 'ALIVE' AS A 'P O S I T I V E.' Pia is the first to discover my secret, namely that I am equivalently a giant 'negative'. From now on everybody can contemplate the AFFRONTED MAJESTY of the Lord Jesus, high Priest, Victim and Bridegroom of the Church.

Did all accept me? Of course not! The strongest hostility came from priests - Chevalier and Thurston - followed by most of Europe's Catholic intelligentsia: waving a plethora of documents to support their opposition. I was a fraud. 'But what about the photographs?' 'Those new-fangled things! don't be silly! Great argument! Agnostic scientists in Paris DID accept me!

In 1931 top professional camera man, ENRIE, (Pia was present) took the twelve official photographs that are registered in Washington. In the Holy Year of 1933 I was exhibited at the request of Pius XI, together with other relics of the Lord's Passion. (Incidentally I am puzzled by my absence from the main shrine of the Passion in Rome, the Relics Chapel in the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, as well as the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem: maybe Pope John Paul, now owning me, will remedy this odd

situation.) In 1936 Pius XI made propaganda for me, not as Pope but as a long-time scientific student devoted to me: he said this photo-image of the Lord Jesus reflected the likeness of his Mother Mary. Then came the wonderful 70's. I was shown on Eurovision - when Pope Paul VI spoke very movingly about me. In '73 they took threads from my fabric: and the experts added their chapter to the growing Book of Intriguing Shroud Information.

STRANGE FINGER-PRINTS

Enter now Max Frei. Who's Max Frei? He was the top FBI-type investigator with the Swiss police: his specialty, POLLEN examination. He took 49 pollen samples from me, and over a space of years, working with Ian Wilson, traced me to Jerusalem, the Holy Land, Edessa, Constantinople, France, Italy. I didn't leave my fingerprints in those places: THEY left THEIRS on me. Max had no hesitation in saying I'd been in Jerusalem. Puzzled by some pollen grains, he discovered they came from flowers still growing in the Holy Land but NOT KNOWN IN THE BOOKS! Notice how I help scientists, as they help me.

I CARRY ANOTHER SECRET AND INSPIRE A THEORY

But the best is still to come. In the 30's Dr Vignon and others mused that some sort of emanation from the Lord Jesus' body had impressed the images on me. Fifty years later in America Drs Jackson and Jumper (USA Air Force) worked with space-camera technology. Result? To their utter astonishment they find that the images are three-dimensional. They used them to activate instruments that reproduced the Lord's body in the round. They presented this wondrous work of human hands to Pope John Paul II. This new discovery led them to back up Vignon's emanation theory but in a different form altogether. Whereas he had thought in terms of vapours, they postulate a thermo-nuclear burst of energy - lasting about three seconds - and emanating vertically from every part of the body. I can easily associate this with the moment just prior to its being transfigured by the power of the Holy Spirit into immortal glory. Only some such theory can explain not only the three dimensionality but also the subtle COLOUR of the images as well as their seeming indestructibility. Seen with the naked eye the overall colour of the images is a faint golden-brown. Tests have shown it's the same sort of 'colour' as that of the scorch marks left after the fire. Are my fibres coloured? No. Their tiny fibrils? Not quite. It's colouration, more accurately DIS-colouration of the top surface area of one or more fibrils. Apparent variation in colour intensity is due to the NUMBER of fibrils so affected. The chemical reaction involved is deep-seated and durable. Hence the conclusion about that burst of energy that fits in so well with the revealed truth about the Resurrection.

Remember St Paul's telling you of the 'strength of God the Father's power at work in Christ when he used it to raise him from the dead'? (Eph 1:18-19) Possibly the same mysterious energy (as well as affecting the fibrils) 'fixed' the blood more firmly into my fibres. For the blood - unlike the subtle surface colouration of the fibrils - does penetrate right through the fibres: the scientists eventually found this out when they removed the backing sheet and saw me from below. Recently they identified the blood type: it's AB+. Moreover they discovered things hidden from our eyes: on the Lord's eyes.

I REMEMBER PONTIUS PILATE

Their new instruments, especially the VP-8 Image Enhancer, revealed things never even suspected before: e.g. images of the COINS used to keep the Lord's eye-lids closed. Defying initial hesitation, doubt, even denial, Fr Filas SJ kept at it till he identified the coins as LEPTONS (like the old farthing). He even made out the inscription letters C A I (C for the K of KAI - Greek for 'Caesar': a mistake by the engraver!); and an astrologer's staff. From other sources they know that these leptons were minted under, guess who? PONTIUS PILATE! in the years 29-30 AD. Even the last letter of the Emperor Tiberius' name appears on the coin: as a 'U' before the 'C'.

So now the laconic account of the Fourfold Gospel concerning the passion-immolation of our High Priest can be complemented by me as the 'Fifth Gospel'. Now you can SEE what the 'horrible flagellum' of the Romans did to the body. In the hands of two men standing behind the Lord, this dreaded instrument - with its dumb-bell shaped bone endings attached to two or three thongs - resulted in the 120 or so weal marks you can count on me. The genuflecting of the soldiers, the slapping, spitting and buffeting that accompanied their firmly fixing the crown of thorns into position (look at the reverse E-shaped blood flow on the forehead), all show the drama of the Messiah-King of the Jews being mocked: as if he were a military commander overpowering the Roman fortress garrison; as if he were - like Barabbas, his two companions awaiting crucifixion and the members of the League of Freedom - a LESTES (Greek for FREEDOM FIGHTER). For the soldiers first hail him as their victorious commander and then revile him as their prisoner, spitting full in his face and so on. See, too, how the horizontal cross-beam has left abrasions on the shoulder blades OVER the marks left by the scourging; the knee-caps are damaged; see where the nails went - pushing their way through the space (of Destot) between four converging bones. Note how the thumb is hidden, turned inwards. See the oval-shaped wound from the soldier's lance between the fifth and sixth ribs, together with the flow of blood and water St John so solemnly bears witness to. Post-mortem blood flowing on to me from

the wounds in the feet and heart is easily distinguished from the congealed blood transferred later to me by contact. See and believe!

WHAT CANNOT BE SEEN

Believe what? That these are images of the Victim of the Cross, immolated after the Oblation made of it by the Church's priestly Bridegroom: to win her for himself. Believe that the images, unspoil't by any evidence of decomposition, point to the glorified condition of your High Priest-Victim: enabling the Bridal Church to be one with him in her offering of his Body and Blood. Believe you have evidence of the supreme GIFT aimed at - the Holy Spirit, to be communicated from that living and life-giving Body: symbolised by the WATER flowing at the cost of sacrificial blood. Treasure and ponder all the words and realities involved; link the images with the sacred heart; the heart with the eucharistic mystery; that with the Covenant and Communion of Christ and the Church; that oneness with what's to come: Vision! Resurrection! Communion of Saints! The New Universe!

And THEN you'll be able to cope with the absurdity of the headlines all over the world in 1988 dismissing my claims. Fancy their assuming my identity was in doubt and that the C14 dating would remove it once and for all! Fancy their ignoring: my being found in Edessa; my being the inspiration for great mosaic icons and when photographed being recognizable from them; my carrying 'finger-print' evidence of the pilgrimage I made from the Tomb to Turin; my ultimate secret, revealed through Pia's camera; my filling books with information from every kind of electro-magnetic wave examination; the three-dimensionality of my image, discovered by the Americans; the self-dating provided by the coin images and made possible by Pontius Pilate. Fancy their ignoring all this because three tiny pieces from my lower left side, turned into carbon pellets and bombarded for a C14 count, seemed to indicate I was fabricated in the 14th century! As if I were a cloth supposedly from the tomb but needing the C14 dating to guarantee my authenticity! But I'm not any burial shroud. I'm unique. I'm THE shroud: the one with the STUPENDOUS ICON OF CHRIST THE LORD on my fabric: long remaining a dim golden-brown imprint (with dark crimson blood throughout) till suddenly revealed in stark detail, along with the secret of my being equivalently a giant camera negative. Fancy their ignoring above all the newly revealed Face, which has filled with awe and instant recognition everybody who has contemplated it! Fancy their not appreciating that because of the Image I bear I am **S E L F - A U T H E N T I C A T I N G**! Nobody could seriously consider for a moment comparing other depictions of Christ with this 'living' image of affronted majesty, that has arrested the attention of the millions who have gazed upon it in world-wide exhibitions. C14 dating is generally used to confirm what is already known about the age of an object. If it doesn't support evidence from other sources the scientists just shrug their shoulders and say, 'Too

bad!' To trumpet forth its negative findings in the case of the shroud is evidence of an irresponsible superficiality, a blameworthy lack of that humility before the real - especially when it's in the realm of the sacred - that marks the genuine scientific investigator. But what IS the C14 dating? Without fear of exaggeration I'd say that not one in a thousand has any idea how C14 dating works or how reliable it is.

Rex Morgan has written about it in SHROUD NEWS (nn.47;49 - June & October 88). There are two methods: the first is based on measuring the change in the proportion between C14 and C12 taking place as C14 decays by radioactivity; the second is based on accelerated mass spectrometry. Remember school? CARBON has 6 positive PROTONS in its inner nucleus, plus 6 NEUTRONS, while 6 ELECTRONS swirl away in two orbits. This is CARBON 12. But when cosmic rays whack into NITROGEN they remove one of its 7 PROTONS and add to its 7 NEUTRONS, turning it into CARBON 14.

Now the rate of radio-active decay of C14 is pretty slow. The number of its atoms is reduced by half in 5700 years. As it begins to decay the proportion of C12 to C14 alters and can be used to calculate how old an object is. But the Holy See wouldn't allow the handkerchief-sized portion needed for this calculation to be removed from me. Then Professor HARRY GROVE found a new method: he could count the number of C14 atoms directly - and needed only a tiny portion of my fabric. The Holy See agreed to three tiny pieces being cut off and sent to dating laboratories in Oxford, Zurich and Tucson (Arizona). Now there are several atoms and molecules that have the same mass as C14. In the labs. they fired 'bullets', each with a loosely attached ELECTRON, at the mixture of equal-mass atoms. Everything there, except NITROGEN, wound up with a negative charge from an electron fastening on to it. Next they shot this charged army of particles down an accelerator. Magnets separated C14 from C13 and C12. Thus they were able to count the C14 atoms directly. Each university repeated the experiment five times. The results were based on a scale of 20 for a modern cloth. So a reading of 10 would mean I was 5700 years old (remember C14's half-life?). If the reading were 16 I would be 2000 years old. They dated me to the 14th century. The results were leaked to the media, and the rest is history. But listen to this from BRYAN KELLY writing recently in The New Scientist: 'If the shroud were genuine and if the Resurrection caused a burst of energy resulting from the activation of stable isotopes of carbon and oxygen, only 18% more C14 so produced over that present naturally in the cloth would provide a carbon dating 1500 YEARS LATER THAN THE DATE OF THE ORIGINAL CLOTH.' Dr Robert Otwall of Harwell Carbon Laboratory confirms that a 1% increase represents 83 years, and the same possibility was admitted by Hall at the British Museum press conference that released the lab. findings.

But the Holy See replied, in a statement released after the findings were trumpeted in the media, that scientists must now evaluate their findings: subtly indicating these must not be used like a stick to beat me with. The mystery remains not only of how the image was impressed on me but of how it has remained there. Meanwhile the Church would continue to reverence THE VENERABLE ICON OF CHRIST ON THE SHROUD. For what it's worth I've heard that the Holy See is preparing a Document to supplement this brief communique. Whether it does so or not, I'm sure the Lord will once



again draw good out of evil and see that truth prevails: to elicit positive praise from much greater numbers - for every-body's now heard about me! - positive praise to drown out the babbling of the 'nervous nellyes.' I hope too, that I will ultimately be revered in every person's Missal; every family's home shrine; every church, Cathedral and Basilica; above all in Rome and Jerusalem - to be seen there, too, by both Jew and Moslem...and acknowledged. Finally I hope you who have listened to me will battle for the triumph of the truth: through operation Holy Shroud.

(SHROUD NEWS: The Runciman Press Box 86, Manly NSW 2095. Also much to see - incl. a full - length photo; read - books, articles; watch - esp. a 2 hr video you can buy for \$30: at The Rome -Holy Land Centre 237 Devonshire St Surry Hills 2060 - Phone 698 5226: Director, Rev P.Little S.J.)>